We claim

1.   A method of providing feedback about a contention point to a source of a multicast connection, the method comprising:

     identifying a slowest stream of the multicast connection at the contention point;

     executing an explicit rate (ER) calculation only with respect to accounting characteristics of the slowest stream at the contention point;

     transmitting a result of the slowest stream ER calculation back to the source; and

     controlling a data transmission rate of said source of said multicast connection using said slowest stream ER calculation.

2.   The method according to claim 1, wherein the multicast connection is set up as an asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) available bit rate (ABR) connection, and said step of transmitting includes writing ER calculation results in resource management (RM) cells flowing towards the source.

3.   The method according to claim 1, wherein:

     the contention point includes a memory buffer for storing cells received from the source in a temporally ordered linked list;

     multicasting is effected by copying cells from the linked list to ports associated with the various multicast connection streams, and a read pointer is maintained for each stream to provide an index into the linked list; and

     said step of identifying the slowest stream includes identifying the read pointer associated with a temporally earliest cell in the linked list.

4.   The method according to claim 3, wherein the multicast connection is set up as an asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) available bit rate (ABR) connection, said packets are cells, and said step of transmitting includes writing ER calculation results in resource management (RM) cells flowing towards the source.